



SWAGO M. E. CHURCH

Soon after his marriage to Nancy Edgar in 1825, the Sampson Mathews gathered a Sunday school in their home. The scholars Isaac, Ruth and James McCollem, Claiborne, Jane, Elizabeth and Jonathan McNeill, and Joshua Buckley. Mr. Mathews would read a chapter and offer prayer. Mrs. McNeill did most of the teaching. The exercises would open at ten o'clock, and there would be a recess at noon. In the yard was an arbor formed by a luxuriant hop vine. Under its shade the children would sit and enjoy their luncheon brought from their homes. After noon the school would continue for two or three hours. The summers of 1826 and 1827 were spent in this useful manner.

This Sunday school was no doubt the very first ever held at Swago. The Mathews, however, were Presbyterians.

The first M. E. class was held by John McNeill in an old barn belonging to Mrs. Pheobe McNeill which was located on the creek bottom just above her grist mill. According to Prices History this John McNeill was the son of Jonathan and Pheobe McNeill. It is hard to establish a date for the organization of this class, but Jonathan McNeill died in 1825 leaving the mill to his wife Pheobe, so that it was in all probability in the first half of the century, perhaps in the 1830' or 40', for it was during the time that services were held in this old barn that the 18 young people went from the M. E. congregation to hear the first M. P. preacher who came to Swago around 1840, and were expelled from the

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M. S. Church for going to hear this new kind of Methodist.

After the civil war, they used the ^{log} school house on the Dry branch of Swago, which was called the Dry Creek school. This school house also has the distinction of being the first public free school in the county. This school house was used for religious worship until in 1873 when the present church was built. George Wanless was one of the first preachers. The present church was built by Jeff Killingsworth and Oliver McKeever, carpenters, under the pastorate of Rev. Harper. The men of the community took turns in donating a weeks free work as assistants to the carpenters. The money was donated by the people. The deed for the lot was given by Reuben M. Overholt and his wife Theobe Ann Overholt, to John Auldridge, Isaac Adkison, George W. Beverage, Reuben Overholt, James Moore, John Duffield, Clark Kellison, and C. B. VanKeenan, trustees.

There are no old class books to be found for any of the churches on the Edray circuit, so it is impossible to get a complete list of the members, but some of them as remembered by older people are Jennie Armstrong, Betsy Kellison, Clark Kellison, Mrs. Clark Kellison, John Auldridge, Mrs. John Auldridge, Nancy Auldridge, George Sheets, Lottie Beverage, Lucy Beverage, John Beverage, Catherine Armstrong, James McNellan, Nancy McNellan, George Kellison, Mrs. George Kellison, George McKeever, Mildred McKeever, and Jane Lauderdale.

Clark Kellison was the Supt. and Class Leader for many years, or until his death. Then these duties were taken over by his son Porter Kellison. Other church workers were C. D.

Deacons, Aaron Moore, W. C. Rogers, G. S. Armstrong, S. A. Rucker and Mrs. A. A. Rucker, Thelma Defner.

The present trustees are Austin Duncan, William A. Rogers, Dean W. Williams and May Walton. Another trustee is to be appointed to fill the vacancy of Porter Kellison recently deceased. Mrs. A. A. Rucker another of their main workers also died this winter.

At this church is an old Bible dated 1847 that was presented to the congregation by Rev. S. T. Price.

From-- John M. Buckley
Mrs. Joe Pennell,
Mrs. Nancy McNeill